

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

In accordance with the present invention, a controller receives information relating to customer activity with a first vendor, typically via a Web page that a customer accesses. The controller further receives an indication of items the customer desires to purchase, the items having an associated total price. The controller determines, based on any of various criteria, whether to provide an offer for a subsidy based on the information relating to customer activity. For example, a customer that places certain items in his virtual shopping cart may receive such an offer. The offer for a subsidy is from a second vendor (a subsidizing vendor), and may define, for example, a reduction in the price charged for the item and an obligation for the customer to fulfill in exchange for the subsidy. For example, the customer may be obliged to sign up for a credit card or telephone service provided by the subsidizing vendor. An indication of the offer for the subsidy is provided to the customer, e.g., via a text or graphical display on the Web page. The customer responds via known user interface techniques and, if he accepts the offer, he is charged a second price for the items. The second price is less than the total price, and may even be zero. Thus the customer may get his desired items for free in exchange for fulfilling the obligation with the subsidizing vendor.